

An Update from Secretary Kawamura

31 October 2006: School Gardens Kick Off A Great Success Plus: Solar-Powered Fairgrounds and Overseas Markets

Dear Friends,

I wanted to let you know that the CDFA farm bill website is being updated. On the [website](#) in November you'll be able to review transcripts from the four farm bill listening sessions held around the state this summer, as well as the written testimony submitted on several important topics.



California First Lady Maria Shriver and Secretary Kawamura in the garden at Locke High School in Watts. Photo Source: Duncan McIntosh, Office of Governor Schwarzenegger

In partnership with the [California School Garden Network](#), Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed October 21 through October 27 as “[California School Garden Week](#)” to promote opportunities for children to discover fresh food, make healthier food choices, and become better nourished. To celebrate this week, I joined First Lady Maria Shriver

on Saturday, October 21, and helped revitalize a half-acre school garden at Locke High School in Watts. Organized by the California School Garden Network (CSGN), the event brought together more than 100 students, teachers, school staff and community members who spent the day working on a school garden in need of an “extreme garden makeover.” By the end of the day, Locke High School had a beautiful, productive school garden--an environment that enhances academic achievement, healthy lifestyles, environmental stewardship, and community and social development. A garden is a wonderful place for kids to learn about the joys and struggles of food production, get connected to our earth's soil, and take pride in what their own hands have created. Gardens reinforce the value of healthy living and active lifestyles.

One of the students wrote an essay about the garden that stated: “Since we started, nothing but hard work has been put in the garden. I noticed that participating in this project has united us more not only as a group but also as a community that we are....This wonderful garden was absolutely the best thing to do at Locke High School.” At this event, CSGN also launched its school garden guidebook, “Gardens for Learning: Creating and Sustaining Your School Garden.”



This book is a one-stop shop for educators seeking information about growing and sustaining school gardens. If you are an educator you can order a hard copy from [CSGN](#) or download it for free from their website.

Our statewide [network of fairs](#) is doing its part to increase renewable energy sources by installing solar collectors on many fairground buildings. Their efforts bring California one step closer to completing Governor Schwarzenegger's [Million Solar Roofs Plan](#). A dozen California fairs already generate 4.1 megawatts of electricity statewide, enough to power 3,200 homes for over 11,000 people. The photovoltaic systems, which convert sunlight into electricity, are mounted on the roofs of fair exhibit buildings and barn facilities in both rural and urban locations. By 2007, another 16 fairs will install enough solar panels and equipment to supply 40 percent of those fairgrounds' total energy requirements. When the goal of 50 fairs is met, those installations will save more than

\$40 million annually, producing electricity that can power about 100,000 homes, or a city of 35,000 people. The photovoltaic project was initiated in 2001 and is a joint effort of the state of California and its network of California fairs, with grants from the [California Energy Commission](#), local electrical utilities and the Fair and Exposition Fund. A new website resource, [Go Solar California](#), offers information for homes and businesses to help make California the nation's leader in widespread use of this inexhaustible, renewable energy resource.

Working with the Agricultural Trade Office in Osaka, Japan, CDFA was able to assist in promoting California products in the MYCAL supermarket chain during a summer sales event. The promotion, which occurred nationwide, increased sales and raised awareness on the diversity of California products. Earlier this month, as part of an ongoing campaign to promote California products in Japan, I had the opportunity to meet with members of the Japanese food media. The group was impressed with the diversity and abundance of California agriculture as well as the systems we have in place to protect our agricultural supply.



Fair and Sunny: Aerial view of Ventura County fairgrounds rooftop solar conversion. Source of Photos: California Construction Authority



California produce on display at a supermarket in Japan this summer. Photo: FAS-ATO/ Osaka, Japan

In November the [California State Employees' Food Drive](#) will be in full swing. CDFA hosts this effort every year. I encourage each of you to be generous with your food donations during the holidays for those less fortunate. A good resource to find out more about local and regional hunger relief organizations in your community is the [California Emergency Foodlink](#).

As always, thank you for your support. Feel free to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A.G. Kawamura'.

A.G. Kawamura
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